

Minutes of the Public Informational Meeting On Request by Advisory Group to Extend Closure of Ahihi-Kinau

April 21, 2010: 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Lokelani Intermediate School Cafeteria
Kihei, Hawaii

See sign-up list for complete attendees. Bill Evanson has sign-up list.

Persons recognized by Staff:

Kathy Becklin

Tom Croley

Tim Farrington

Mary-Anne McNeeley

Rick Long

Larry Stevens

Staff in attendance:

Bill Evanson NARS

Matt Ramsey NARS

Joe Fell McDonald NARS

Judy Edwards NARS—taking minutes.

Iokepa Meno NARS

Hianano Rodrigues; SHPD

? = unnamed audience member

7:00 pm Bill Evanson opening:

We are to gather public comment. There was an Advisory Group meeting on Apr. 8 2010. At that time, the Ad Group passed a motion to request DLNR to continue the existing closure, which expires in July 2010. Group moved to leave Reserve closed through the entire process of establishing/implementing a Management Plan. There will be many opportunities for public review of the management plan process as it goes. We are right now in Write/Review/Revise part of that process.

DLNR is tasked with making sure the Reserve is closed for only the amount of time absolutely necessary. DLNR has conflicting mandates of conservation and recreation.

The Ad Group was established in 2004 by DLNR to regulate the commercial kayak activity in the area. Recommendation from the Group was that the commercial

kayak activity be banned. Ad Group was dealing with concerns about human use in general, and was commercial operations really big enough of an impact given how many other people also use it? We knew then that the general public were a majority of visitors in the Reserve and at some point concern over their impact would trigger a search for some way to manage visitors. There was concern that the Reserve would be unable to maintain viability under sustained pressure.

A Commission was formed to oversee actions in the NAR program. The final say in any decision made in DLNR is made by the Board of Land and Natural Resources. The Ad Group's recommendation for closure goes forward, will be heard at the NARS Commission meeting May 5 in Honolulu. We are taking comments tonight to forward to the Commission and the Board for their consideration.

June 10 2010 will be the meeting of the Board and they will have this item on their agenda.

Bill shows Power Point presentation of the Mgmnt. Plan Process that started in Fall 2007 with help from TNC. See Bill's Ppt. for complete steps 1—5. Followed by 'Proposed Next Steps' (Attached hereto).

Bill E.: This whole management plan process will be well-advertised. The Board will be the entity that will formally accept the final Plan and we hope that staff can implement all parts of it. This was the concern of the Ad Group, that there be enough time to do it (create a good first Management Plan) right and fully.

Introduction of Rangers to group: (Danielle K. not present)

Questions from the audience:

?: How long will the closed part stay closed?

Bill E.: closure can't go longer than two years. The Ad Group wrestled with this, they didn't want it/the Reserve closed area opened until the Management Plan had its objectives implemented.

?: The state is so broke, what is realistic to keep 5 Rangers employed? You must develop other sources of income.

Bill E.: Hence the sustainable financing part of the Plan. The economy is unpredictable.

?: Could implementation of the Management Plan be held up by funding issues?

Matt Ramsey: it's possible. The working groups have floated many options including fees for entry, guided tours, or have one person there a few days a week and let things deteriorate to 3-year-ago levels.

Tom Croley: I'm anxious to hear Matt's plan update, but what is the funding issue I keep hearing about? Have read the newspapers a few days ago/last week, what's up?

Matt R/: a number of different bills are targeting different Divisions of the Dept. The one that made the news didn't affect the NARS (DAR/DOCARE/and upper-level admin/mgmt.), but the one floating around right now could. Current bill is looking at emptying our savings or taking away the taxes allocated to NARS.

7:15 Matt presents ppt.Update on the Advisory Group Plan Summary

- 1. Review of Closure History**
- 2. Analysis of Action Plan**
- 3. Summary of Resource Surveys**

FOR FULL LIST OF SLIDES, SEE MATT'S PRESENTATION. LISTED only SLIDES THAT ELICITED COMMENT(S)

?: re: the slide of the cyanobacterial mat footprints, what is that? (Matt explains)

Matt's Discussion:

(statistic: 93% of all calls that went into DOCARE triggered a response from them)

Tom C.: clarification—basically, the two departments are working together better right now.

Matt R.: enforcement of the rules is made easier with signs to back up Rangers and new laws in place to support Reserve. Also, Rangers have been spending a lot of time doing surveys to lay down baselines and get data.

?: Besides guided tours, do you foresee any other public access to this facility? Have you made other considerations such as certifying locals on how to use the area?

Matt R.: depends on what the Commission and Board say. We are looking at many ways to do that, or not do that, depending. The best way to address your concerns is to send your comments into the formal hearings—submit written testimony now to get it to the Board LNR, NARS Commission and to the Working Groups.

?: I like use of the facility, hiking and snorkeling, and for many years have gone there, moved to Makena to be closer to it. When were public hearings on the closure? I never heard about them—the ones in 2008. Just found out about it on the news. I'd like to see it preserved but I'd also like to use it. Basically we're only talking about Fishbowl and the Aquarium. These are only a small percent of the total area closed. I'm part of the public. I pay property tax. Everything I've attended or heard goes toward closure.

Matt R.: I can go back through the notes for the Mgmt. Plan and send them to you.

?: All meetings I've gone to are about extending closure, not about public access. I wish more about public accessibility is being worked into your meetings. It's such a small percentage of the total area—.

Matt R.: I just talked to Na Ala Hele Council and they had the same concerns too, but they are going to submit testimony, you should as well.

?: Will do that, not sure how many people feel like I do.

Matt R.: what's important is the input. Do you mind if I move on?

Mary-Anne McNeeley: How does one go about limiting or limited access? When access was allowed it was all the people in the most fragile area. The key thing would be to come up with how we can limit access so the previous #s don't go back into the same places.

?: Sure, but they're not talking about how to bring up stuff in the Plan.

Iokepa Meno: you still can hike out to LP, the Lighthouse, you still have Ahihi Cove and Dump's for snorkeling. Just hearing the words Fishbowl and Aquarium, these are modern names.

?: To me it seems like a simple fix is trails clearly marked. We've seen people wandering everywhere, most people would stay on the trail if they knew where they were.

Matt R: we've walked the trails and mapped them and no matter what we have to establish one trail where everyone goes. How we would mark those trails, not sure. There are 65 manini-trails that come off of KLL trail alone. We've mapped and documented.

?: Volunteer groups would help you establish a trail, mark it, whatever, and there are ways to do it that are unobtrusive.

Matt R: the Working Groups have looked at everything from huge methods to subtle stuff to mark trails.

?: Somebody was discouraging people from going down the trails years ago, before even the closure.

?: The Aquarium cove area really needs an isolated point of entry, like the small rubble beach.

Matt R.: trail markers are priorities for us.

- Matt shows high-use corridors slides.
- Matt shows Marine monitoring methods slide.

Tom C.: to be clear: was Montipora White Syndrome a natural occurrence?

Matt R.: nobody knows, is in Kaneohe Bay as well, not sure of the human link, or the stress factors.

- Matt shows Anchialine Pond Monitoring Methods slide.
- Matt shows Human Use Monitoring Methods slide.

Tom C.: how many signs are there in the Reserve?

Bill E.: over 170 total in Reserve. People don't read them.

- Matt shows Awareness of Closure Areas graphs

Tom C.: where were these people queried?

Matt R.: we will answer that question later, stand by.

The purpose of this analysis is to figure out where our strengths and weaknesses are.

Our strengths are the staff being there.

Our weakness is the outreach to hotels, car rental companies, etc.

Tom C.: Matt, I disagree with your conclusions, you can't draw these conclusions from the data you've presented. But do realize that the five of you can't do it all.

?: I swim at the cove, signs there are a little bit off and out of area of where people get in the water. Need a sign with big print at the entry area. I tell people whenever I'm there not to step on the coral. Need simpler signs that people 'get'. I'm concerned that the remaining open places are being overused. No have volunteers there anymore, so need good sign RIGHT THERE. I was sad about overuse and agree the closed area needs to be closed and have the time to come back. That's more important than my personal joy as swimming there. Also, I'm concerned about the amount of roi in the Reserve, they are eating everything, are everywhere. Can we not have a roi roundup? Why not there? How can you allow this introduced species to come in and decimate all the fish?

Matt R.: several groups are interested in this, we looked into it and worked with TNC and are looking to get funding for that. What's difficult is that it is not proven that roi are invasive or destructive. Big Island DAR staff, Bill Walsh, is studying this.

?: But it was in the paper, how many fish they eat a year. There are so few places like it left, Kihei is pretty bleak, and the reefs are pretty done. I have lived here over 30 years and care about the ocean, and now there are all these huge roi everywhere.

Matt R.: It's painfully obvious that they're thriving in the Reserve. However, it is up to the commission to make those decisions, based on science.

?: Who should we address our concerns to? When is the meeting?

Bill E.: May 5th (Commission meeting).

Matt R.: grab my card, send me an email, I'll forward your comments about the roi to the Commission. But the example of the COTS is that a wrong panic happened early, they're seasonal, they come and go and eat specific coral, it turns out they have a 'role' on the reef.

?: Yes, but you have to really monitor that sort of thing.

Matt R.: agreed.

MaryAnne M.: I have seen roi working in packs.

Matt R.: yes, they operate by harems. But let's move on.

Matt R.. Vehicle count slide. HWF data of years past.

M. Vehicle count slide showing current data.

M. Frequency of vehicles use vs. Calendar.

M. PPL count data slide.

END PPT. PRESENTATION.

Bill E.: Let's open for discussion. Feel free to move around, ask questions.

?: If it's true that someone on the ground is the most effective form of communication—what about volunteers?

?: What happened to the volunteer program?

Matt R.: it was not set up properly, I take responsibility. There was little oversight; it was not the best program. We are working on that again, now. The Commission is very supportive, wants the volunteer program up and running. There are things that need to be changed, but I have no time table. The first thing that has to happen is the installation of the repeater.

?: What is the holdup on the repeater?

Matt R.: it is a technical secure site with lots of admin oversight, not a funding issue.

Tom C.: is it not an issue of putting something IN the Reserve?

Matt R.: no, it will be on the mountain.

Bill E.: Maui Police Department secured Homeland Security money to fund the repeater project; they have no communication themselves down there and are anxious to get it up. There is a whole system that they must implement at the same time. We get in free, but they have to get the OK from the whole entire system and they have a lot of issues. For example, the security fencing around the secure facilities has been shown to catch native seabirds, so they're now addressing that and other issues. Things are moving very slow. Government moves very slowly.

?: Who can we speak to? The public needs to contact who?

Bill E.: we've been complaining too, but send an email to Matt and he'll make it go to the right place.

?: Does (the supplied) comment form go in tonight?

?: What about having volunteers in already open areas? My phone catches in the places people are, that's why I got ATT.

Joe Fell-McDonald.: we need something dependable, Rangers can't always be reached if WE are in a place where we can't get your call or get you back.

?: You are always there, we know you're (Rangers) around.

Matt R.: it is equally frustrating for us. The NARS Commission wants volunteers on the ground and our funding could cut all staff by August. But, we have to make sure we don't make the same mistakes we made before. We want a solid program.

?: The last Ad Group meeting really disappointed me. The most vocal gentlemen at that meeting were very adamant, and you know how I mean. I think there should be a date by which the management plan should be completed. If it's not done by that date, open the Reserve. Also, you know how I stand as a volunteer. We had good intentions, to me; the #1 priority is getting the repeater so we can be down there, with guidance, to protect the area. We are here, we want to make a difference, and we want to work with you and not against you. Also, it looks like the intention is more permanent closure. I hope there is limited access, controlled, by respectful people. Finally, I saw the meeting announcement this afternoon; it was too short a notice and is conflicting with something at the Whale Sanctuary tonight.

Tom C: I have zero respect for the Advisory Group. I researched it and closure was the very first conclusion of the very first meeting. When I came to the next meeting and heard your plan, it was clear that they were working to keeping it closed. The Ad Group

wants it closed. A few landowners down there with selfish interests want this place closed. This is paralysis by analysis. If I had seen progress from the beginning... What's more important to me is that there are other people down there helping you talk to people. I led hundreds people out to AQ for years, and took people from the street, kept them on the path and showed them the way in. I hope I was doing a good thing. This idea that closing it will preserve it for future generations—I don't buy it.

?: Matt, your presentation is skewed. I saw the photo of the kayaks in earlier presentations too—commercial use was banned long before this last closure. You're skewing it toward closure in my view. The birding issue is also skewed (data that Hawaiian stilts are now seen in anchialine pond areas along the former AQ 'trail'), we appreciate the job you're doing but you're not opening it up to public access. You can have your opinion but you can't skew it or there's no hope that you're taking input seriously.

Matt R.: I apologize that you feel this way. Technically, we didn't have to have this meeting but we have the honest urge to get public input. All of us are well aware that we have to get public input.

Bill E.: You weren't at the other meetings or in the process, so there's a lot you haven't seen or heard. There are just as many people that want the Reserve open as closed. Other places like Hanauma Bay determine entry by carrying capacity based on the parking lot and how full it is. When capacity is reached they radio up and the entry is closed. So be careful what you ask for. We also need to look at carrying capacity. It takes time.

?: So the simple result is to just close it. And that's not a solution.

Bill E.: The initial closure was based on fear of damage to the resources at the time and was done with public input.

Matt R.: until you see the notes on the process to date, you won't see the whole picture.

?: I just want to say thank you for being there and having meetings.

Bill E.: thanks for coming and tell us what you think we need to hear. Write your comments down; email them in, stay in the process.

MaryAnne M.: my understanding is that the mandate for NARS is preservation first, not public use first. I'm very concerned that the original intention be to preserve it, to the point that I'm asking that Ahihi Cove be closed because of impact. I'd like people to keep that in mind.

Bill E: the Rules as written are very restrictive, hiking and nature study are permitted, but disturbing the geology is prohibited and with all the rocks down at the reserve it is virtually impossible to walk around and not turn over a rock or disturb the geology.).

When you step on lava and crush it and it doesn't fix, it doesn't grow back. Lava doesn't grow back. How long are we to preserve this in its unmodified state? .

?: Bill, you're taking this to the nth degree. Let's just ban cars then. Let's just ban everything.

Bill E.: Staff has to work within the system framework, I am not stacking anything, keep in mind that public mandate also can open the Reserve, so be careful what you ask for.

?: We need to work together, don't just close your mind.

Kathy Becklin.: We all know our gov't funding is getting cut. We have to start moving forward and stop using gov't resources.

?: I want to be able to access those places, I want to be able to use them.

Bill E.: we had front page headlines at the time running up to the closure. I understand that you didn't feel like you had adequate input enough ahead of time. This is the first time in recent history that DLNR has closed anywhere for resource protection, except this area, and it's because an Advisory Group, that they asked for, made that recommendation. Advisory Groups give us advice, we have to follow that. The Ad Group is made up of stakeholders and interested parties. If we didn't listen to the Advisory Group we'd look pretty bad.

?: Have you at any time gone to snorkel shops to let us know about this? You should go to the heads of the shops and talk to them directly.

Judy Edwards: Yes, I did, and I'll come again. Happy to help, I drop brochures by all the time but understand there is a lot of staff turnover. Here's my contact info.

Bill E.: We'll give you as much info as we can. We've asked MAUI REVEALED to modify what they wrote, and they thumbed their noses at us and said not helpful things in the next printing about the State asking people to stay on the trail, but that there were a lot of interesting things to be found OFF the trail. It's incumbent on the people who manage the land to make it clear to people on the ground what the rules are and how to behave. That's why volunteers are important. Our office in the NAR is in stasis there. We want the office up and running. Volunteers need an office, a place to check in and turn things in.

Kathy B.: We've been waiting to do this for so long—the Ahihi volunteers.

Bill E.: The National Park treats their volunteers like regular 40-hour employees, uses them 5 days a week. Not sure you want to do that. Regular Volunteer programs need to be well-structured and organized and it takes a lot of effort. We have all these people who are willing to help us but we need to be safe, effective and efficient.

Kathy B.: how about having volunteers at just peak periods?

Bill E.: It would be good even if we had one person at a table at a time in parking lot, maybe that.

Kathy B. Great! Who's responsible for getting the management program done?

Bill E.: I am, with Matt's help.

We are doing very different things here, very intensive management for DLNR. Other divisions wonder how we can continue to afford this. Other Divisions are concerned we are setting precedent. Example: the hard time we've had getting the buoys. We're daring to do things no one has done because area is extremely valuable and the NARS system requires we be that intense and labor-intensive.

Kathy B.: I agree, but I want to get some volunteers going.

Bill E.: Please keep expressing your opinion, we appreciate your fortitude.

Kathy B.: a woman at the lavender farm remembered me, asked what happened to the volunteer program.

Bill E.: there are opportunities for mutually beneficial meetings of the minds. Did you get your comments in?

Scattered conversations. End notes.

9:30 p.m.